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U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee**William L. Armstrong, Chairman****February 2, 1988**

Western Europe and the INF Treaty

[This is the third in a series of papers on the INF Treaty. For an examination of the issues surrounding the Treaty, please see our December 1, 1987 publication, "The INF Treaty: Issues to Consider."]

Western European support for the INF Treaty is well known. What is less well recognized are important European concerns about NATO defenses in the post-INF era. This paper offers a sampling of the broad and diverse reactions to the INF Treaty in Western Europe.

SUMMARY

- All Western European governments officially support the INF Treaty.
- European (and American) officials agree that the consequences of non-ratification would be detrimental to the continued well-being of the alliance. This is because the leadership position of the U.S. would be questioned, while the Soviet Union would be perceived as the promoter of peace in Europe; NATO would be unable to continue its INF deployments and may, in fact, be forced to withdraw existing INF deployments due to strong public pressures; and worst of all, while U.S. systems would be withdrawn, without an agreement, the Soviet Union would be permitted to maintain its INF systems.
- A fear expressed by well-informed European (and American) officials is that the greatly needed modernization of NATO's remaining nuclear forces may be curtailed by the arms control/detente euphoria produced by the INF Treaty. Will European politicians be able to support the introduction of new nuclear weapons (not covered by the INF Treaty) when the U.S. and Soviet Union have just agreed to remove INF weapons?

- European leaders are not united as to what the next steps should be. While certain elements would like to see short-range nuclear systems the subject of negotiation and reduction, most European heads of state and NATO as a whole believe that the central focus of future disarmament talks should be on U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear systems and NATO-Warsaw Pact conventional and chemical weapons. Western European public opinion will no doubt impact on future plans for modernization and/or arms control.
- It is as yet unclear what the implications of Article 14, the non-circumvention clause, will be for future U.S.-Western European defense cooperation and modernization.

WHERE THE EUROPEANS STAND ON THE INF TREATY

1. Governmental Endorsements.

French Socialist President Francois Mitterrand supports the INF Treaty publically, and personally feels that it will contribute to western security, especially if it leads to further disarmament steps. His remarks are indicative of the French Socialist party as a whole:

"It is the first time that the Soviet Union and United States have disarmed since World War II and it is the first time that verification on enemy territory has been accepted. In this sense, it is an exceptional event which will become historic if it marks the start of a real peace process, which must be taken much further but will not become historic if no further progress is made."
[Le Nouvel Observateur, 18-24 December 1987, pp. 23-26]

French Conservative Prime Minister Jacques Chirac is more reserved in his support for the treaty, linking it to an agreement reducing U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear arsenals:

"The INF agreement is a positive accord if it is followed by other agreements which will permit the reinforcement of security in Europe. This sole accord is not in the nature of reinforcing security in Europe which remains threatened by considerable armaments... The strategic armaments of the superpowers should be the object of an agreement on disarmament. At that moment, it would be an historic agreement." [December 8, 1987 radio interview in Lille, France, provided by U.S. Embassy, Paris]

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has stated her support for the Treaty:

"That agreement [INF Treaty] will be the reward for years of constancy in defense and firmness in negotiation. It has Britain's full support. It is good for our security and is an important step towards a more peaceful and stable world." [Speech of November 16, 1987, Printed in State Department report, Statements By World Leaders On The INF Treaty, no date given]

British Foreign Minister Sir Geoffrey Howe and Defense Minister George Younger have also publically endorsed the treaty, with Howe calling the agreement a "formidable achievement." ["Allies are wary of defense cost," Washington Times, September 21, 1987, p. A9.]

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has also endorsed the INF agreement:

"The Summit...will go down in history because it has produced the first real disarmament agreement...All U.S. and Soviet land-based nuclear intermediate-range missiles with ranges of between 500 and 5,500 km will be abolished worldwide. Thus the security of millions of people, especially in Europe, will be improved." [Statement in the Bundestag, December 10, 1987, Printed in State Department report, op. cit., p. 4]

The Chancellor also pleaded for the creation of a conventional equilibrium at a low level, a ban on chemical weapons, and the disarmament of short-range nuclear missile systems. Foreign Minister Genscher not only embraced the INF Treaty, but called for a "third zero" agreement, removing the short-range nuclear forces (SNF) from Europe. ["Genscher, Kohl Pleased," DPA German News Service, November 24, 1987. Printed in FBIS November 25, 1987, p. 4]

The other Western European governments also heartily endorsed the INF Treaty, as this statement by Belgian Prime Minister Martens makes plain:

"The INF Treaty is therefore also our triumph. Along with the other NATO allies, Belgium accordingly hopes that it will be quickly ratified." [Statement of December 9, 1987, Printed in State Department report, op. cit., p. 2]

Every major Western European political and security organization has lent its support for the INF Treaty. This includes the North Atlantic Council, which is composed of Western European, American, and Canadian Members of Parliament [See "North Atlantic Council Ministerial Communique," December 11, 1987]; the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, composed of NATO Defense Ministers, who endorsed the Treaty in their November 1987 meeting in Monterey California; and the Western European Union which resolved, on December 2, the following:

"The Assembly...urges the Senate of the United States to give its advice and consent to the Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces as expeditiously as possible." [WEU Assembly Resolution of December 2, 1987, Printed in State Department report, op. cit, p. 10]

2. Reservations held by Prominent Government Officials.

It would be a mistake to assume that the INF Treaty has been greeted by all Europeans with the same enthusiasm that the above quotes would suggest. Government officials, primarily those in the Ministries of Defense, are troubled by what the INF Treaty may portend for NATO strategy and future NATO modernization plans, as well as future disarmament steps. The central fear is that the arms control euphoria created by the agreement will weaken NATO's consensus for a strong defense. One example of this viewpoint is the following statement by Alain Peyrefitte, former French Justice Minister and now a Member of Parliament: "Deployment of the Pershings had consolidated a new consensus around firm defense of the West...Their withdrawal will shake this consensus and boost neutralism." [Reported in "West Europeans Concerned About Conventional Arms," Washington Post, December 10, 1987, p. A32]

Emphasizing that the elimination of the INF category of weapon does little to enhance NATO security without consummate reductions in Soviet strategic nuclear weapons that are also capable of targeting Western Europe, the French Foreign Minister, Jean-Bernard Raimond stated:

"...In the absence of a ceiling on strategic systems, an INF accord would lose much of its effect since, hypothetically, the fact that one could get around it by higher systems would be assured. It would be fruitless, in effect, to celebrate the elimination of 810 SS-20 warheads, in part aimed at Western Europe, if, simultaneously, the same number of arms are capable, hypothetically, of hitting the same targets in Europe, and are part of so-called strategic systems, like, for example the new Soviet SS-25." [November 5, 1987 Speech to National Assembly]

A chief aid on arms control for German Chancellor Kohl, Horst Teltschick, characterized the concern of those conservative elements in Germany that are uneasy about the INF Treaty. The central point he raises is that without the Pershing II and GLCM, the U.S. may become decoupled from the defense of Western Europe because the U.S. would hesitate to use its strategic nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union on behalf of Western European defense:

"If the double-zero option becomes reality... the alliance will lose its ability to reach Soviet territory from European soil with U.S. nuclear missiles. That certainly means the renunciation of one of the most efficient instruments of war prevention. On the other hand, the Soviet Union is keeping all its nuclear options toward Western Europe open, even if it has to reduce three times as many nuclear intermediate-range missiles... The European alliance will have to rely for their security essentially on U.S. nuclear systems that can reach the Soviet Union from U.S. soil or from the sea. Thus the alliance is confronted with the revival of a discussion that we had in the sixties and seventies: Is the U.S. also prepared to use those systems for the survival of Europe?" [Article in Die Welt, December 4, 1987, p. 6. FBIS, December 9, 1987, p. 10]

Manfred Woerner, the German Defense Minister, has expressed concern regarding the disparities in the conventional balance, which are accentuated by the removal of NATO INF weapons from Europe. When Minister Woerner takes up his new position as NATO Secretary-General this summer, his stated goal will be to maintain the West's option on modernizing its tactical or short-range nuclear weapons [Interview with Defense Minister Woerner by David Marsh, Financial Times (London), December 17, 1987].

3. Other European critics and concerns.

While the majority of Western European citizens and politicians support the INF Treaty, statements by various arms control and defense experts, politicians, and newspapers in Western Europe reveal some concerns about the impact of the treaty on Western European security. A partial sampling:

French Presidential Candidate Raymond Barre during an interview on French Television on the eve of the Summit:

(It is) "absolutely necessary to engage in an arms control process and to reduce arsenals," (but) "to begin by intermediate-range nuclear forces is to create a hole in deterrence." (The treaty will) "put Europe in a situation of inferiority." [December 7, 1987 interview, Printed in State Department report, op. cit., p. 5]

French defense expert, Pierre Lellouche:

"The truth needs to be told. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Francois Mitterrand, for example, express enthusiastic support for the INF Treaty in public but speak

differently in private; they know better. Europeans need to be told that there is no alternative to the policy that has successfully maintained European peace for forty years, namely a mixture of nuclear deterrence and a robust conventional defense." [Article in International Herald Tribune, January 11, 1988]

Die Welt (German Newspaper):

"Nuclear weapons are an essential element of deterrence. A conventional war is more likely to break out again if our deterrence potential lacks the nuclear component. The complete withdrawal of Pershing II and cruise missiles as provided in the INF arms control treaty will have a decisive impact on the Soviet Union's assessment of the risks it will encounter when attacking Western Europe." [Editorial of December 10, 1987]

Seventy-three European political, military, and intellectual leaders signed an appeal to link the INF agreement to substantial reductions in the Soviet Union's superior conventional and chemical forces. They wrote:

"Far from enhancing Western security, we believe (the INF agreement) would shift the military balance in favor of the Warsaw Pact and assist the Soviet Union in seeking to induce political changes in the West favorable to its interests... We are also fearful that it would weaken the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee to Europe, sow discord within the Alliance, and seriously erode the reputation and influence of the U.S. upon which free societies remain crucially dependent." [The appeal, entitled "Western Interests in the Arms Talks," was run in the Washington Post, November 17, 1987]

ISSUES FOR CONGRESS

Next Steps: Modernization or arms control?

Even as they await U.S. ratification of the INF Treaty, Western Europeans have begun to debate the next course of action. The central themes of this debate involve the choice between continuing with already established guidelines for NATO nuclear force modernization, or initiatives for further reductions in long-range strategic nuclear weapons, short-range nuclear forces in Europe, conventional forces, and chemical weapons.

Modernization. NATO's plans for nuclear modernization were promulgated at the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) ministerial meeting at Montebello, Canada, in October 1983. The "Montebello Decision": a) reaffirmed NATO's commitment to the dual-track decision and its implementation; b) noted the completion of an earlier decision to unilaterally withdraw 1,000 nuclear weapons from NATO's stockpiles; c) called for the further withdrawal of 1,400 nuclear weapons from the stockpile during the next few years; and, most importantly, d) identified a range of possible improvements to NATO's nuclear force posture and conventional forces.

The main elements of NATO's theater nuclear modernization program include:

- 1) The development of a Follow-on to the LANCE surface-to-surface missile with increased range, improved accuracy, and improved operating characteristics;
- 2) The development of a standoff Tactical Air-to-Surface Missile (TASM);
- 3) The modernization of NATO's Artillery-Fired Projectiles (AFAPs); and
- 4) The continued modernization of NATO's dual-capable (nuclear-conventional) aircraft and associated nuclear bombs.

[See the Defense Department's recent report to Congress, Support of NATO Strategy in the 1990's, printed in the Congressional Record of January 27, 1988, pp. S125-S137]

Arms Control. At the June 1987 Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at Reykjavik, Iceland, the alliance stated its comprehensive concept of arms control, which, in addition to an INF agreement, includes:

- A 50 percent reduction in the strategic offensive nuclear weapons of the U.S. and U.S.S.R.;
- The global elimination of chemical weapons;
- The establishment of a stable and secure level of conventional forces in the whole of Europe; and
- In conjunction with the establishment of a conventional balance and global elimination of chemical weapons, tangible and verifiable reductions of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missile systems of shorter range, leading to equal ceilings.

[Statement on the ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council at Reykjavik, Iceland (11-12 June 1987)]

Contrary to NATO's emphasis on reductions in strategic nuclear systems and conventional forces, some elements in Europe have called on the alliance to deal with the short-range nuclear systems immediately after signing the INF Treaty. This is heard most prominently by German Foreign Minister Hans-Deitrich Genscher, who has argued that NATO should pursue a "triple zero" agreement eliminating short-range and tactical nuclear weapons. Genscher's position appeals to many Germans who are uneasy about the fact that most of NATO's short-range nuclear weapons are based, and would be employed, on German territory. Conservative elements in Western Europe, and Germany in particular, also support the concept of reducing short-range missiles to some lower level, but reject a zero option. Their central concern is the vast 15:1 Soviet superiority in the short-range missile category.

A central concern for the U.S., therefore, is what impact the INF treaty will have on the existing NATO defense consensus to modernize conventional forces and nuclear forces not prohibited by the INF Treaty? Senior Western European diplomatic sources seem to indicate that many European leaders are now convinced that the way ahead is to negotiate the elimination or reduction of the remaining short-range or battlefield nuclear weapons. [Based on interviews in Western Europe, December 1987. See also, "Europeans aren't sure about value of nuclear arms treaty," Chicago Tribune, December 3, 1987] In such a climate it would be politically impossible to launch into a spending spree on modernizing NATO's conventional and nuclear weapons. According to Dominique Moisi, associate director of the French Institute for International Relations, there was "naivete in the NATO [modernization] program because there is no money to finance it and public opinion is against it." ["Europeans aren't sure about value of nuclear arms treaty," Chicago Tribune, December 3, 1987, p. 1]

The INF agreement, and the arms control environment it will engender, may also have the adverse effect of polarizing European and American arms control interests, thus deepening the rift between American and European perceptions of security. One of the paradoxes borne out of the INF Agreement is that the more the United States emphasizes strategic nuclear arms reductions, the more the Western Europeans will want to emphasize reductions in the short range nuclear force category. This is because Europeans will feel that the United States, by pressing for START reductions, will be reducing the nuclear threat to the superpowers while magnifying the dangers of limited nuclear warfare on the European continent.

Article XIV: Noncircumvention Clause

Related to the modernization issue is Article XIV of the treaty, which, though it does not say so explicitly, may be used by the Soviet Union and the European left to proscribe future U.S. and Western European nuclear modernization efforts. The article reads:

"The Parties shall comply with this Treaty and shall not assume any international obligations or undertakings which would conflict with its provisions."

While administration officials have testified that nothing in the INF Treaty can be construed so as to interfere with planned NATO nuclear and conventional force modernization, or with U.S. and allied joint cooperative weapons development programs, the phrase "shall not assume any international obligations or undertakings which would conflict with its provisions," is just ambiguous and vague enough to give the Soviet Union a basis for complaining about future NATO modernization efforts.

Already the Soviet Union has indicated that it would view any NATO nuclear modernization as being inconsistent with the purpose of the Treaty. During his visit to Bonn on January 19, 1988, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze warned that western proposals to deploy new nuclear weapons as substitutes for those being scrapped by the INF Treaty would "scuttle" all of the recent progress in disarmament. Shevardnadze went on to strongly criticize NATO's nuclear force modernization proposals, specifically urging West Germany and other NATO allies to drop plans to deploy a new, modernized version of the battlefield-range LANCE missile. ["Shevardnadze Hits NATO Arms Plans," Washington Post, January 20, 1988]

Soviet calls for denuclearization will sound attractive to a Western European public that is already opposed to further deployments of nuclear weapons, and which is always in favor of disarmament. The practical result of this is that each time NATO decides to deploy a weapon system that, while not prohibited by the INF Treaty, comes close to the range limitations defined by the Treaty, the Soviets and the European left will cry "circumvention." A long and difficult debate could then ensue in the west as we decide whether or not we are violating the "spirit of the agreement."

Conclusion: NATO After The INF Treaty

The INF Treaty ratification process leads NATO to once again reexamine the viability of its strategic concepts for deterrence and defense. It is not a subject the alliance happily deals with, for such discussions threaten to expose the different security predicaments and hence, perceptions, of the various alliance partners. At heart of the debate (at least for the Western Europeans) is whether the U.S. strategic nuclear guarantee remains credible after the Pershing II and GLCMs are removed. This question was considered before the weapons were deployed in Europe and is sure to be reconsidered upon their removal. The alliance will have to face squarely a number of important arms control, modernization, and doctrinal issues that have the potential for causing tensions within the alliance if they are not handled adroitly.

In the late 1970's, and primarily as a result of the neutron bomb debacle, the European allies had lost confidence in the ability of the U.S. to lead the alliance. Under the Reagan administration, confidence in the U.S. has been restored and, as the success of the dual-track decision illustrates, alliance resolve and cohesion has been strengthened. It would be tragically ironic if a treaty meant to strengthen the alliance had the opposite effect by creating doubts in the minds of the Europeans as to the efficacy of the American security guarantee to Western Europe. Bearing in mind the potentially divisive impact of the INF Treaty, the countries of NATO must be prepared to address, with careful thought and planning, the important defense issues prompted by the INF Treaty.

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